

the left-hand page, and so above the plates, which are immediately under the pupil's eyes. The printing and the plates (the only figure that does not please us is the oval on Plate II.) leave nothing to be desired.

We proceed to point out a few matters which we think admit of improvement. Plate II. in the definition of a circle *invariant* is used; why not "constant?" The construction of Fig. 6 (Plate IV.) is hardly satisfactory to our view, though it is one very frequently given; the tangent to the two arcs is not obtained by a legitimate method. We cannot make out the definition of an harmonic mean given on Plate VII., but the means are correctly constructed. In Fig. 31 (text), for GH:HA, read *vice versa*. We may remark that it is a curious fact that the approximative construction given in Fig. 87 is true in the cases of regular figures of three, four, and six sides. In Fig. 99 (text) read "through F and E." In Fig. 112 (text) arcs "cutting in C," not G. Constructions to Figs. 123, 125 give particular ellipses; so in the case of the parabolas in Figs. 138, 139, we note that certain figures are stated to be co-centric and certain curves have asymptotes. In Fig. 271 (text) read to cut in "I and H." We object, on pure geometric grounds, to the constructions in Figs. 278, &c., where a line is found equal to the semi-circumference of a circle, &c.; also the inscribed circle of a square and the inscribed triangle are stated as being in the ratio, triangle:circle:square, as 2:3:4. In Fig. 279 (text) the two last A's should be D. The construction to Fig. 297 (to draw a line to bisect any triangle from a given point within it) is new to us, and on a cursory examination of it we have not satisfied ourselves of its correctness. In Fig. 314, for XY, read ZY. In Fig. 316, "the square on," or some such words have been omitted. In Fig. 323 the limitations have not been laid down. In Fig. 329, "join point x," &c.; in 331, for "rectangle" read "parallelogram." These trivial oversights will serve to show how correctly the text has been printed.

OUR BOOK SHELF

Observaciones Magneticas y Meteorologicas del Colegio de Belen de la Compañia de Jesus en la Habana, 1873 y 1874. (Habana, 1874 and 1875.)

THE observations made at the College of the Society of Jesus, Havana, are peculiarly valuable for the fulness and care with which they are made, and for the completeness with which the observations themselves and the monthly means and extremes are given in each monthly table and its accompanying diagram. The diagrams, which have been published in their present improved form since June 1873, and which exhibit on one sheet the two-hourly observations as made daily from 4 A.M. to 10 P.M. of all the meteorological and magnetical elements, will very much facilitate the study of those inquiries which deal with the inter-relations of these elements. To these observations are added the daily amounts of the rainfall and evaporation—the latter being of great interest as contributing to our knowledge of the evaporation in inter-tropical regions, of which so little is known. Whilst only the daily amounts of the rainfall is given, each hour during which rain falls is noted, together with the hour of occurrence of thunder and other irregularly recurring phenomena. As regards the diurnal variations of the wind it changes from about S.E. in the early morning, through E. and N.E. to N.N.E. its most northerly point, which is usually reached about 2 P.M., and thence in the

reverse direction through N.E. and E. to E.S.E., which is reached about 10 P.M. The diurnal velocity is at the minimum at 4 A.M., rises to the maximum at 2 P.M., and thence falls steadily to the minimum. The N. and N.E. winds are decidedly the strongest, and the S.E. the weakest, the ratio being as two to one; in other words, the sea-breeze blows with double the velocity of the land-breeze at this station.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

Blowpipe Analysis

MR. HUMPIDGE (vol. xiii. p. 208), on the entirely gratuitous assumption that I use "commercial reagents"—whatever that term may mean—says that there is probably iron in my soda.

To this I only reply that I will undertake to show pyrologically the presence of 0.01 per cent. of iron oxide in a fragment of a salt the size of a pin's head; and that, when Mr. Humpidge can do as much without using the dangerous test potassium ferrocyanide (which itself contains iron), I will admit his right to assume that he knows his tools better than other workmen.

No one has ever doubted the proportional relativity in precipitating power between a drop and a gallon of water, but if Mr. Humpidge will only do me the justice not to mutilate my statements in the reproduction, he will repeat that a precipitate could not be shown in a drop of water "on a fused mass upon an aluminium plate."

W. A. ROSS

Shepherd's Bush, W., Jan. 14

The D-line Spectrum

WILL Prof. Stokes give us the reason of his now holding that his first—to all appearance, extremely rational—conclusion, that, in consequence of "the powerful affinities of sodium, it could not exist in a free state in the flame of a spirit-lamp," is "erroneous"? Shepherd's Bush, W., Jan. 8

W. A. ROSS

The Difference of Thermal Energy transmitted to the Earth by Radiation from different parts of the Solar Surface.

THE tenor of certain letters received from scientific persons on the above subject induces me to lay the following statement before the readers of NATURE:—

I. Previous to undertaking a systematic investigation of the mechanical properties of solar heat, I examined thoroughly the merits of Laplace's famous demonstration relating to the absorptive power of the sun's atmosphere, proving that only one-twelfth of the energy developed by the sun is transmitted to the earth. The demonstration being based on the assumption that the sun's rays emit energy of equal intensity in all directions, my initiary step was that of testing practically the truth of that proposition. It has been asserted that Laplace did not propound the singular doctrine involved in such a proposition, I therefore feel called upon, before proving its unsoundness, to quote the words employed by the celebrated mathematician. (See "Mécanique Céleste," tome iv. page 284.) Having called attention to the fact that any portion of the solar disc as it approaches the limb ought to appear *more brilliant* because it is viewed under a *less angle*, Laplace adds:—"Car il est naturel de penser que chaque point de la surface du soleil renvoie une lumière égale dans tous les sens." Let *abcd*, in the annexed diagram, Fig. 1, represent part of the border of the sun, and *ba*, *cd*, small equal arcs; *ad*, *bb*, *cc*, *dd*, being parallel rays projected towards the earth. Laplace's theory asserts that owing to the concentration of the rays the radiation emanating from the portion *dc* transmits *greater* intensity towards the earth than *ba*, in the proportion of *cd* to *fc*. The proposition is thus stated in "Mécanique Céleste": "Call θ the arc of a great circle of the sun's surface, included between the luminous point and the centre of the sun's disc, the sun's radius being taken for unity; a very small portion *a* of the surface being removed to the distance θ